



Commuter ChoiceSM Leadership Initiative Phone Forum Marketing Your Commuter Benefits May 22, 2002

Available exclusively to Commuter ChoiceSM Employers, phone forums provide cutting-edge information on a range of topics related to commuter benefits. Moderated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these forums feature experts on key topic areas.

On May 22, 2002, the Commuter ChoiceSM Leadership Initiative (CCLI) held a phone forum focusing on marketing commuter benefits to employees and prospective employees. Patty Klavon, EPA forum moderator, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participants.

Featured Participant Presentations

Four Commuter ChoiceSM Employers shared success stories from their programs on how to market commuter choice benefits internally and externally.

Linda Bainbridge, Nike, Inc.

Linda Bainbridge has managed Nike's commuter choice program since 1994—the program was implemented in 1992. Through the program, Nike provides commuter benefits to approximately 5,000 employees at its suburban campus in Beaverton, Oregon. Nike also provides a variety of onsite amenities so that employees do not need cars during the day to run errands or get lunch.

With limited resources for marketing, the program traditionally relied on the company's Web-based newsletter and signboards in the building lobbies as the primary means of promotional outreach. In response to an assessment that found low employee recognition, Nike implemented a branding campaign in 2001 to raise the profile of the program. As part of the cam-

paign, Nike held a contest to develop a new program logo and title. The new program name kept the old acronym TRAC (Traveling Responsibly via Alternative Commuting) and converted it to Traveling Responsibly? Accept the Challenge. Nike gave prizes to the winners and used the logo on its internal Web site, banners, informational flyers, and buttons that employees could post in their cubicles and offices.

Nike also promotes commuter choice to new hires through an e-mail that describes the program and prominently features the logo. Nike will test employee recognition again next year and expects to see improvement.

For more information, e-mail Ms. Bainbridge at <linda.bainbridge@nike.com>.

Karen Hollingsworth, Bellingham Cold Storage

Karen Hollingsworth is the education and training coordinator at Bellingham Cold Storage (BCS). BCS is a private company on Puget Sound in Washington, which has between 120 and 225 employees, seasonally variable.

BCS provides adequate free parking for all employees, which is a significant challenge to promoting commuting alternatives through its Smart Commuter Program. From 1993 to 1997, the program did not have an official coordinator, and only one employee participated. Since 1999, Ms. Hollingsworth has worked to significantly raise the program's profile and engage employees by giving them a sense of program ownership. As a result of this more focused and consistent effort, 58 employees are now enrolled.

BCS has conducted a range of activities to market the program, including:

- Giving prizes to alternative commuters suited to their mode of transport (e.g., gift certificates for shoes to walkers).
- Giving small recognition prizes during break periods to gain the attention and interest of other employees.
- Announcing the program and awarding small prizes (e.g., movie and lottery tickets and gasoline gift certificates) at the company's annual employee appreciation dinner. Ms. Hollingsworth also makes the announcements in Spanish to reach non-English speaking employees.
- Hosting a "Bike or Walk to Work Day," where employees who bike or walk are greeted by cheerleaders and receive free bagels, coffee, and juice.
- Hosting a "Get in Motion Day", which encourages innovative commuting, such as walking, biking, skateboarding, and kayaking.
- Hosting a "Rideshare Day" where all ridesharing employees receive a \$10 gift certificate for a local gas station/market.

According to Ms. Hollingsworth, the keys to a successful commuter benefits program are having management support, particularly top-down participation that is visible to employees, and making it fun.

For more information, e-mail Ms. Hollingsworth at <karen.hollingsworth@bellcold.com>.

Carolyn Martin, St. Joseph Hospital

Carolyn Martin is the employee transportation coordinator at St. Joseph Hospital of Bellingham, Washington. St. Joseph's commuter choice incentive program pays any of its 1,800 employees \$1.50 a day for using any transport method other than driving to work alone at least 2 days a week. When St. Joseph Hospital implemented the program in 1999, the availability of ample free parking limited participation, but construction has reduced the number of spaces. St. Joseph's also reserved additional spaces for rideshare participants and began to more aggressively market the program. Enrollment is now

up to 330 employees, with 130 to 140 participating each month.

St. Joseph Hospital markets its program through promotional e-mails, newsletter announcements, and Intranet postings. In addition, St. Joseph Hospital:

- Gives prizes on Bike to Work Day.
- Hosts a summer commuter challenge.
- Participates in the statewide Rideshare Week.
- Gives away a \$25 gift certificate each month in a drawing for alternative commuters.
- Provides commuter choice orientation and assistance (i.e., help finding carpool partners or identifying bus routes) to new employees.
- Offers a monthly bus pass to employees at no cost.
- Uses an informational display.
- Surveys employees every 2 years to measure support.

For more information, e-mail Ms. Martin at <cmartin@peacehealth.org>.

Jan Ward, City of Boulder, Colorado

As the employee transportation coordinator for the City of Boulder, Jan Ward works with the city's Downtown Business Improvement District to promote commuting alternatives. The city has a shortage of parking, but to keep the downtown area healthy and attractive, the city decided to not build more parking and instead focus on promoting alternative commuting.

The city set a goal of getting employees of businesses in the district out of their cars at least 2 days a week. When the program started 8 years ago, 35 percent of the district's 10,000 employees participated. Participation is now up to 42 percent.

To achieve its goals, the city provides a variety of commuting options and incentives and partners with local businesses, which are very supportive. Particularly significant is the Ecopass, which is good for all types of public transportation and encourages people to work downtown. The Ecopass would cost \$1,200 a year if

purchased by employees, but it is fully subsidized by the city and employers. Another option is the Spokes for Folks program, which provides free bicycle rentals.

Boulder markets its program by emphasizing the connection between alternative commuting and personal and community health. The city also runs a transportation resource center that serves as a central point for commuting information, assistance, and resources. In addition, the city conducts a pedestrian foot race three nights in the summer. Through the city's efforts, alternative commuting has become a valued part of culture for those who live or work in Boulder.

For more information, e-mail Ms. Ward at <wardj@ci.boulder.co.us>.

Open Discussion

Following the featured speakers' presentations, other forum participants asked questions and provided additional information on some of the points discussed.

- Peter DuBois of Clark County, Washington asked for suggestions on how Clark County could best use their very limited (\$500) promotional budget. Participants suggested giving small prizes (e.g., lottery tickets, movie tickets, gift certificates for gasoline) to outstanding alternative commuters or hosting a competition.
- Edward Abuor of Yahoo! Inc. shared information on some of Yahoo's successful commuter choice marketing activities, including:
 - Holding luncheons hosted by senior executives for program participants.
 - Making employees aware of the tax saving benefits of alternative commuting.
- Participants noted that there are currently no tax benefits available for bikers and walkers. For more information on this issue, visit <www.bikeleague.org>, which discusses H.R. 1265, "The Bike Commuter Act". This legislation would

let employers give employees a \$65 per month tax benefit for commuting by bike to work.

Information on the tax benefits of commuter choice is available on the Web site at <www.commuterchoice.gov/resource/benefits.htm>.

- Robin Rolls of Stanford University suggested that CCLI provide more resources for employers' newsletters. Newsletter announcements are an effective marketing tool, but can be difficult because of the time needed to write articles or locate and arrange for the use of other articles. Patrice Thornton of EPA suggested interested employers register for the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) listserv, which is an excellent source of commuter choice related news and information. Ms. Bainbridge also suggested that participants sign up for other newsletters in their area or industry.

To register for the TDM listserv, visit the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) listserv Web site <www.nctr.usf.edu/clearinghouse/connections.htm>. Click on TRANS-TDM Listserv (lower left), click on Transportation Demand Management, click on transp-tdm, then follow directions to join.

- Joan Murphy also requested more assistance with newsletters. She suggested that the press releases EPA, Commute Connections, Clean Air Campaign, etc., send to the media be made available to CCLI employers on the CCLI Web site. That service would help employers by giving them some of the latest news without having to be concerned about copyrights, credits, or permissions when reprinting articles.

The CCLI Web site's Newsroom <www.commuterchoice.gov/newsroom.htm#press> has a list of articles from external publications.

- Eleonore Price of the Washington State Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) described some of the incentives DSHS uses to promote commuting alternatives, including bicycle lockers, showers, free bus passes, preferential parking for carpoolers and vanpoolers, and transportation fairs.
- Ms. Ward reminded participants to consider external grants as an additional source of funds for marketing and implementing commuter choice programs. She suggested that CCLI consider putting together a list of grants received by participants and/or a list of available grant resources.
- Ms. Klavon reminded participants that CCLI does provide marketing tools, including the:
 - Marketing Commuter Benefits to Employees brief in the Employer Resources section of the Web site <www.commuterchoice.gov>. Employers can also obtain the brief by calling EPA's publications service at 800 499-9198.
 - Welcome Aboard Kit, which includes sample press releases and is also available on the Web site.
 - CCLI account managers (all employers will soon be receiving a call and/or letter introducing and explaining the role of their account manager).
 - Commuter ChoiceSM Employers identifier, which is service marked for use by participants in marketing efforts.
- Mary Kate Cole of the City of Rockville suggested using "potty posters" behind plastic on bathroom stall doors as an effective promotional complement to e-

mails. Ms. Price noted that there might be health or safety considerations that need to be addressed for this activity.

CCLI National Recognition Event

Ms. Klavon shared information on the CCLI National Recognition Event that was held on May 14, 2002, in Washington, DC. EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman hosted the event, where she noted that only 5 percent of U.S. commuters work for employers that provide any commuter benefits, which makes Commuter ChoiceSM Employers that meet the National Standard of Excellence the "cream of the crop" as the most progressive organizations. Ms. Klavon suggested that employers use that message in their marketing efforts. Ms. Klavon also alerted participants to the upcoming CCLI regional events in Denver on May 30 and San Francisco on June 27.

The press release and Administrator Whitman's talking points are on the Web at <www.epa.gov/epahome/headline_051402.htm>.

Closing

Ms. Klavon closed by thanking the featured participants for their enlightening presentations and thanking all Commuter ChoiceSM Employers for participating in the forum. She welcomed employers to provide suggestions and ideas for future forums and reminded them that CCLI is available for assistance by contacting <commuterchoice@epa.gov> or calling the hotline at 888 856-3131. The next forum is planned for June and will address sources of funds for marketing and implementing commuter benefit programs.